

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

AT THE

OPENING OF THE NINETY-THIRD SESSION

OF THE

GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL.

May 23, 1911.

GENTLEMEN,

In assembling for our Ninety-third Session, we miss from their accustomed places three members of the COUNCIL who were with us last year. Dr LEONARD McMANUS, one of the three representatives elected in 1906 by the practitioners resident in England and Wales, has been removed by untimely death in the midst of his career of active usefulness. He possessed in a high degree the confidence of his fellow-citizens and of his professional brethren in London, and the public tributes that have been paid to his memory testify to the faithfulness with which he fulfilled the trusts he undertook. His colleagues in the COUNCIL, who had many opportunities of appreciating his loyal nature and his practical good sense, will share in the widespread regret for his loss, and will approve the expression of sympathy with his bereaved family which I ventured to offer in their name.

Sir THOMAS MYLES, appointed in 1905 by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, has on account of other pressing claims resigned his place on the COUNCIL. By his service on several important Committees, and by his ready and opportune contributions to our debates, he maintained the tradition of efficiency and geniality which we have come to associate with Members from his College and country.

In parting with Sir JOHN WILLIAMS, as one of the Crown Members for England, the COUNCIL will have cause to realise afresh the advantage it has derived, during the past ten years, from his great knowledge and influence in all that relates to obstetrical science and practice. Our sense of responsibility in regard to a whole department of Medical education, and in regard to the administration of the *Midwives' Act*, has been lightened by the consciousness that we could always rely on his sagacious counsel and co-operation.

In the room of these colleagues, who have so well merited our gratitude, three others have been appointed whose eminent services elsewhere assure them of a welcome in this COUNCIL. Dr J. A. MACDONALD, of Taunton, has been chosen as one of the Direct Representatives for England. He has filled with acceptance more than one important position in connexion with the British Medical Association, and has given many proofs of his capacity for business and his grasp of current professional questions. Sir ARTHUR CHANCE, past President of the Royal College, is recognised as a leader among the surgeons of Ireland. Like Sir THOMAS MYLES, he has already given valued assistance to the COUNCIL by acting as one of its Examiners at the Apothecaries' Hall of Dublin. We now count on his help in a wider field of action. Sir FRANCIS CHAMPNEYS, who has been appointed by HIS MAJESTY in COUNCIL to take the place of Sir JOHN WILLIAMS, is eminent in the same department of practice, and as Chairman of the Central Midwives Board has guided that body with notable ability and discretion through its difficult initial stages.

The COUNCIL may well congratulate itself on the accession of influence, and of strength for its work both general and special, which the appointment of these new members ensures to it.

One old member, Dr LEONARD KIDD, returns to the COUNCIL for a further term, having been re-elected without opposition as the representative of the registered practitioners of Ireland. The rare compliment thus paid him by that constituency will be endorsed without surprise by his colleagues of the COUNCIL.

The circumstances of the elections in England and Ireland have forced on our notice certain serious inconveniences arising

from the provisions of the *Medical Acts*. The time allowed (*twenty-one* days) for the preparation, issue, return, and counting of voting-papers is so short that much of the work has to be arranged for, and most of the necessary expense has to be incurred, before the last day for receiving or withdrawing nominations. When after all no contest takes place, this expenditure of labour and money proves to be needless. If *thirty* days were allowed instead of *twenty-one*, the waste could be avoided.

Again, the *Medical Act* (1886) directs that a member elected to fill a casual vacancy shall hold office, not for the remainder of his predecessor's term, but for the full term of five years. The result may ere long be that in England, instead of a general election of four members taking place every five years, we may have a series of single elections taking place at much shorter intervals. As the expense of a single election is about the same as that of a general election, this result would involve a heavy additional drain on the COUNCIL'S funds, without any clear advantage to the constituency or the COUNCIL.

If an opportunity should arise for obtaining a slight amendment of the *Medical Act* (1886), I suggest that attention might profitably be given to these and other points of detail, which our experience has shown to be of some practical importance for the economical administration of our resources.

Certain proposals for fresh legislation, which have already been under consideration by the COUNCIL, have made but little progress since the last Session. Your views on the draft Bill for regulating the Administration of Anæsthetics were duly communicated to the LORD PRESIDENT. I am informed that they are now before the HOME SECRETARY, with whose department it lies to initiate legislation on the subject, should the Government decide on that course. The opinions of the Licensing Bodies on the proposal that the COUNCIL should be empowered by law to register the Diploma in Tropical Medicine, as an additional qualification, were in accordance with your *Resolution* obtained by the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, and forwarded to the PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE for its information. They were accompanied by a request from the Apothecaries' Society of London that, in framing the necessary amendment of the *Medical Act*, the PRIVY COUNCIL should include a provision authorising the Society to

confer similar Diplomas on candidates who had duly passed its examinations. The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE see no objection to this extension of the Society's powers as a Licensing Body, provided the arrangements set forth in Section 5 of the *Medical Act* (1886) are made applicable to its examinations for the Diplomas in question as well as to its qualifying examinations.

A measure providing for the Registration of Nurses was on February 27 introduced in the House of Commons as a private member's Bill; and it has since been printed. The Bill proposes to create a General Council for the United Kingdom, whose duties shall include the framing of rules for "regulating and supervising and restricting within due limits the practice of registered nurses." Such rules are to be subject to the approval of the PRIVY COUNCIL; but no provision (such as exists in the *Midwives Act*) is made to ensure that the rules, before being approved, shall be submitted to this COUNCIL for consideration. The COUNCIL has already informed the LORD PRESIDENT that it regards such a provision as necessary, in view of the conditions and responsibilities of medical practice. On calling the attention of the authorities to the above-mentioned omission, I was informed that, should the Bill be proceeded with, steps would be taken, in accordance with the terms of the PRIVY COUNCIL's communication of March 18, 1910 (*Minutes*, Vol. XLVII, p. 181), to procure the insertion of a suitable amendment on the lines of that proposed for the new *Midwives Bill*.

We have received from the PRIVY COUNCIL certain amended Rules framed by authority of the Central Midwives Board. In accordance with the *Midwives Act* these will be submitted to the ENGLISH BRANCH COUNCIL, of which Sir FRANCIS CHAMPNEYS is now a member.

Another Bill is before the House of Commons for the amendment of the *Veterinary Surgeons Act* (1881), which is not without interest for those who exercise their profession for the relief of human suffering. Its preamble states, first, that "the profession of veterinary surgeons is not protected from unqualified persons practising as such under the cover of registration under the Joint Stock Companies' Acts," and secondly, that "it is desirable to provide further funds for the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons to enable it to conduct examinations,

prosecutions, and enquiries authorised by Statute," etc. The Bill accordingly provides that "an offence under the Veterinary Surgeons' Acts if committed by an individual shall be an offence if committed by a company;" and, further, that registered veterinary practitioners shall pay an annual fee to the College, the statutory body which regulates veterinary education and registration.

It is not for me to forecast the prospects of this measure; but the fact that it is now submitted to Parliament suggests that its promoters have more hope of remedial legislation, in the interest of practice affecting the health and safety of the lower animals, than experience would justify us in entertaining were the interest in question merely that of practice among men, women, and children. I have merely to remind you that the Bill for the Prohibition of Medical Practice by Companies has not yet passed into law; and that the income of the GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL is this year again insufficient to meet the expenditure incurred in the discharge of its statutory duties.

The COMMITTEE ON UNQUALIFIED PRACTICE has had before it the *Report* on the subject issued by the LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD in the course of last Session. Dr LANGLEY BROWNE, as CHAIRMAN, will bring up the COMMITTEE'S comments on the *Report*, and the recommendations it offers regarding the next steps to be taken.

The LORD PRESIDENT has been so good as to forward to the COUNCIL, for its information, copies of the *National Insurance Bill* recently introduced by the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER. This far-reaching measure touches at so many points the conditions of professional efficiency in this country that it is difficult without close and prolonged study to estimate its effects, immediate and remote, on ordinary medical practice, on clinical hospitals, on public health administration, and on professional education. The CHANCELLOR has admitted this difficulty, and has intimated his willingness to consider such suggestions and criticisms as he may receive from the medical profession of this country. From the nature of its statutory functions, the GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL is necessarily concerned with certain aspects of each of the questions I have indicated; and in virtue of its statutory Constitution it includes repre-

sentatives of all departments of medical practice, and of all registered practitioners, incorporate or unincorporate, within the United Kingdom. I suggest, therefore, that it will be proper for the COUNCIL to respond to the CHANCELLOR'S invitation, and to offer him advice and assistance in relation to matters within its province which appear to be involved in the proposals of the Bill. If you approve this suggestion you will probably find it convenient, after some general discussion, to appoint a Committee, with instructions to consider the medical clauses of the Bill, to watch it during its successive stages, to receive communications from members of the COUNCIL, to make representations to the LORD PRESIDENT for the information of the Government, and to report from time to time its proceedings to the PRESIDENT for communication to the members of the COUNCIL. Should you desire to form such a Committee, it may be well to ask each of the BRANCH COUNCILS to nominate (say) three members for the purpose.

On behalf of the University of Wales a Bill has been placed before Parliament for the purpose of enabling that University to hold qualifying examinations under the *Medical Acts*, in order that its degrees and diplomas may entitle their holders to registration. The Bill also proposes to confer on the University the power of appointing a member of this COUNCIL on the conditions laid down by recent *Acts* relating to other Universities. As this question has on several occasions been before the COUNCIL, which has called the attention of the University to the need for such legislation, I felt justified in informing the promoters that they might count on the COUNCIL'S assent to the steps that have now been taken.

The LORD PRESIDENT and the SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS have agreed to accept the invitation forwarded by the German Government, asking that a British delegation of five members should be appointed to represent this country on the International Committee for Post-graduate Medical Instruction. I understand that members will be chosen by the several Government departments with which medical services are associated. The LORD PRESIDENT has done me the honour to suggest that, as your PRESIDENT, I should in the meantime represent him on the Committee, with a view to a more permanent organisation of the British delegation.

Under your directions, Mr ARTHUR SWAYNE UNDERWOOD, M.R.C.S., L.D.S., was appointed by the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE to be Inspector of Dental Examinations on behalf of the COUNCIL. He has already visited and reported on six of the examinations, and in accordance with the *Standing Orders* his reports have been sent to the Boards concerned for their observations. A *Report* on the whole cycle of inspections will in due course be presented to you by the DENTAL EDUCATION AND EXAMINATION COMMITTEE.

To the three Standing Committees on EDUCATION, EXAMINATION, AND PUBLIC HEALTH, important questions have been referred, dealing mainly with the purport and effect of the COUNCIL'S *Resolutions* and *Recommendations* on these subjects. I am not in a position to anticipate the conclusions arrived at by the several Committees, but I am aware that much thought and labour have been devoted to the *Reports* which are now in preparation, under the direction of their distinguished Chairmen.

The PHARMACOPŒIA COMMITTEE has received from the Committee of Reference in Pharmacy a further report containing suggestions for the improvement of the *Pharmacopœia*. This report, with a promised supplement, will conclude the valuable series which has been furnished by the Committee of Reference. It will be published in the usual manner for the information of those concerned. The materials for revision, now accumulated in the hands of the PHARMACOPŒIA COMMITTEE, are sufficient to enable it to proceed with the preparation of the first draft of a new issue of the *Pharmacopœia*. For this purpose it will be desirable to procure skilled editorial assistance, and the COMMITTEE hope to complete the necessary arrangements during the summer. As some years must elapse before the work thus initiated is ready for publication, a fresh impression of the official *British Pharmacopœia* 1898 has been ordered, to meet the steady demand for it which still exists.

The COUNCIL will be called upon to exercise its judicial functions in the case of certain practitioners, who are alleged to have unjustifiably associated themselves with the practice of unqualified persons or companies. As the complaints in question are lodged by various incorporated bodies, including the BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, it will be necessary for me to

act on the advice of our JUDICIAL ASSESSOR, and to direct that no member of the complainant body shall take part in any enquiry in which it is concerned.

A glance at the Provisional Programme will show that the work before the COUNCIL this Session is more than usually varied and important. It may not be possible to overtake it all in the course of the present week, but we may have every confidence that it will be dealt with at once carefully and expeditiously.